

EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER ESCALATING VIOLENCE, GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ONGOING ATTEMPTS TO OVERTHROW DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 62) expressing concern over the escalating violence, the gross violations of human rights, and the ongoing attempts to overthrow a democratically elected government in Sierra Leone, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 62

Whereas the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military junta, which on May 27, 1997, overthrew the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone led by President Ahmed Kabbah, suspended the constitution, banned political activities and public meetings, and invited the rebel fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to join the junta;

Whereas the AFRC and RUF then mounted "Operation No Living Thing", a campaign of killing, egregious human rights violations, and looting, that continued until President Kabbah was restored to power by the Economic Community of West African States Military Observation Group (ECOMOG) on March 10, 1998;

Whereas the AFRC and RUF have escalated their 8 year reign of terror against the citizens of Sierra Leone, which includes heinous acts such as forcibly amputating the limbs of defenseless civilians of all ages, raping women and children, and wantonly killing innocent citizens;

Whereas the Kamajor civil defense group has committed summary executions of captured rebels and persons suspected of aiding the rebels;

Whereas the AFRC and RUF continue to abduct children, forcibly provide them with military training, and place them on the front-line during rebel incursions;

Whereas countries in and outside of the region, including Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Libya, and mercenaries from Ukraine and other countries, are directly supporting the AFRC/RUF terrorist campaign against the legitimate government and citizens of Sierra Leone;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that last year more than 210,000 Sierra Leoneans fled the country to Guinea, bringing the number to 350,000, most of whom have left Sierra Leone to escape the AFRC/RUF campaign of terror and atrocities, as have an additional 90,000 Sierra Leoneans who have sought safe haven in Liberia;

Whereas the refugee camps in Guinea and Liberia may be at risk of being used as safe havens for rebels and staging areas for attacks against Sierra Leone;

Whereas the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone has reached epic proportions with people dying from a lack of food, medical treatment, and medicine, while humanitarian operations are impeded by the countrywide war and the resultant destruction of infrastructure;

Whereas the Nigerian-led intervention force, ECOMOG, has deployed some 15,000 troops in Sierra Leone in an attempt to end the cycle of violence and ensure the maintenance of its democratically elected government at the request of the legitimate Gov-

ernment of Sierra Leone and with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);

Whereas the escalating violence and terror in Sierra Leone perpetrated by the rebel AFRC/RUF threatens stability in West Africa and has the immediate potential of spilling over into Guinea and Liberia;

Whereas the ECOWAS Group of Seven recently met in Guinea in an attempt to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a negotiated settlement of the conflict; and

Whereas the United Nations report in February 1999 documented human rights abuses by the RUF, the Kamajor civil defense group, and summary executions by ECOMOG: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) welcomes the cessation of hostilities and calls for the respect of human rights by all combatants;

(2) applauds the effective diplomacy of the Department of State and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, United States Special Presidential Envoy for the promotion of democracy in Africa, particularly the successful efforts in helping to formulate a cease-fire arrangement;

(3) supports the efforts of all parties to bring lasting peace and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone;

(4) calls on all parties, including government officials and the RUF, to commit to a cease-fire;

(5) appeals to all parties to the conflict to engage in dialogue without any preconditions to bring about a long-term solution to this civil strife in Sierra Leone;

(6) supports the people of Sierra Leone in their quest for a democratic and stable country and a reconciled society;

(7) urges the President, the Secretary of State, and the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs to support the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone and continue to give high priority to helping resolve the devastating conflict in that country, which would be an important contribution to stability in the West Africa region;

(8) abhors the gross violations of human rights ongoing in Sierra Leone, including the dismemberment of citizens (including children) by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and demands that they immediately stop such heinous acts;

(9) condemns the West African countries and those outside the region that are aiding the AFRC/RUF and demands they immediately withdraw their combatants and cease providing military, financial, political, and other types of assistance to the rebels in Sierra Leone;

(10) applauds the Economic Community of West African States Military Observation Group (ECOMOG) for its support of the legitimate Government of Sierra Leone and urges it to diversify its forces with troops from additional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries and remain engaged in Sierra Leone until a comprehensive settlement of the conflict is achieved;

(11) calls upon the United States to provide increased, appropriate logistical and political support for ECOMOG;

(12) calls on the United States to appoint an independent commission to investigate human rights violations;

(13) calls on the United Nations Security Council to fully support, financially and diplomatically, the activities of the human rights section of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL);

(14) calls upon the United States to provide increased, appropriate logistical and political support for Ghana and Mali, countries that participate in ECOMOG; and

(15) urges the President to appoint a special envoy for Sierra Leone.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 62, the resolution now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution addresses the tragic situation in Sierra Leone where the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Kabbah has been under siege by rebel forces. The RUF rebels, as the Subcommittee on Africa has heard, have used despicable tactics of political terror against civilians, which does throw into serious question these forces' commitment to a peaceful and democratic Sierra Leone.

We can only hope that the current cease-fire and ongoing political negotiations between the government and the RUF will produce a lasting political settlement.

Today, Sierra Leone is suffering a humanitarian crisis with hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans having had to flee their country.

As this resolution notes, Sierra Leoneans are suffering from a lack of food. They are suffering from a lack of medicine. As a matter of fact, the suffering is acute. Many victims have lost their hands, have lost their limbs. Many have severed lips and severed ears because of political terror. Amputation is a part of the tactics used by the RUF in order to terrorize the opposition.

This resolution calls for an end to hostilities which, frankly, have the potential of destabilizing all of West Africa. It condemns the gross human rights violations that have shocked the world, and there should be no doubt it is the rebels that have been by far the greatest perpetrators of human rights violations in Sierra Leone.

This resolution calls on specific West African countries to cease providing military aid to rebel forces, and that aid, of course, aids and abets their carnage. It calls on the U.S. to provide additional support for ECOMOG forces that are providing a measure of stability in Sierra Leone. Clearly, the U.S. needs to do more for ECOMOG.

The situation in Sierra Leone greatly concerns many Members of Congress. Over the last year, the Subcommittee on Africa has held two hearings on this conflict. This resolution introduced by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) reflects what this subcommittee has learned through these hearings. I urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution concerning Sierra Leone. I would especially like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) of the Subcommittee on Africa for his work on this very important issue. I should also like to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), for bringing this resolution up so swiftly through the full committee last week.

Let me also thank my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), who has been concerned about Sierra Leone for many, many years and for his resolution last week that congratulated everyone involved, especially the Reverend Jesse Jackson, for securing a cease-fire between President Kabbah and Corporal Foday Sankhoy at the talks.

I am pleased that the cease-fire was called and serious negotiations are beginning in Lome. I know that the President of Togo, General Gnassingbe Eyadema, is anxious to get the process moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, the brutal civil war in Sierra Leone has gone on for 8 horrific years. Even during the 30 years of independence, we have seen a country that has been governed improperly, where resources have not been used throughout the country, and that you have a different country from Freetown and the rest of the country. Twenty thousand people have been killed, hundreds have been maimed, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced; and, as we have heard about the horrendous violence from the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) previously, there is not anyplace in the world where the atrocities to this degree should be allowed to go on.

H. Res. 62 expresses the sentiment of the House of Representatives that it is time for the war to end and for all combatants to commit to maintaining the cease-fire and continue talks that will lead to peace and true national reconciliation.

H. Res. 62 abhors the violence against innocent civilians that has characterized the late stages of the conflict. Additionally, the resolution condemns the human rights violations by all combatants, the RUF, the Kabbah government, the Nigerian-led ECOMOG.

H. Res. 62 calls upon the United States Government to increase its dip-

lomatic efforts by pressuring the government and the rebels to remain at the peace talks. It will be difficult because of the brutality of the conflict but, we must urge them to sit at the table and come up with a negotiated settlement.

The government of the U.S. is encouraged to appoint an independent commission to investigate human rights allegations and appoint a special envoy for Sierra Leone in an effort to stop the fighting and end the war.

To date, a cease-fire has been in effect since May 25, 1999. The government of Sierra Leone, headed by the democratically elected President Kabbah and the rebel Revolutionary United Front, called the RUF, have worked out an agreement for exchange of prisoners.

However, the diplomatic effort of the U.S., the UK, ECOWAS and other diplomats will be tested as the two sides grapple with the tricky and final issues of power sharing, a transitional government and the removal of foreign troops.

The stakes are high in Sierra Leone. The stability of the West African region depends on peace and stability within its regions.

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As I said, we commend Reverend Jesse Jackson and the State Department, but the people of Sierra Leone must resolve their deep seeded ethnic, social, economic, and political problems for peace to have a chance to take root.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS), who has had a special interest in the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone, and who has worked with his church to try to urge adoption of this resolution.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for yielding me this time.

I commend the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for his activities in this area and for the work he has done on Sierra Leone. I sponsored a similar resolution last year, although not as detailed as this one, because issues had not developed to this point.

The gentleman from California has been extremely helpful and very interested in the Sierra Leone issue and has done all that can be done in the Congress to address this issue.

I also wish to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) for sponsoring this resolution and bringing it to our attention. I appreciate his interest and his support in this effort.

It is very troubling when one examines the situation in Sierra Leone. It is particularly troubling when one compares our Nation's response to this situation to the response we mounted in Kosovo and Yugoslavia. It is dan-

gerous to make comparisons, of course, because they are far different parts of the world. But I do find it troubling that, even though Sierra Leone had more deaths and more people displaced than Kosovo at the time the bombing began in Kosovo and Yugoslavia, we did not choose to take action in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, this is a clear case, I believe, showing aggression or at least involvement from other nations outside of Sierra Leone, particularly Liberia. There is clear evidence of that, but there is also substantial evidence that Libya has been involved in stirring the pot and creating great difficulties there.

My interest in this goes back almost 20 years. I was involved in a task force on world hunger appointed by my denomination, the Christian Reformed Church of North America. I am results-oriented, and I insisted that we develop recommendations that would be meaningful and that our small denomination could handle with its 350,000 members. We came up with the suggestion for our denomination to adopt Sierra Leone and help them in every way possible.

Our church has been active there for some time but has been forced by events of the last year to withdraw. We had substantial success in Sierra Leone in helping with development, particularly in the bush region, and helping them drill wells, provide water, start farming, and develop economically as well as agriculturally. In addition, we have tried to help in other areas, in cooperation with the government.

It is a great disappointment to see the situation deteriorate in Sierra Leone. In fact, one of the national workers in our church's effort there was killed recently while innocently walking down the street. When the RUF gunman was asked why he shot this person, his response was, "Well, I have not shot anyone for a week; I thought it was about time."

This is the type of terror that is taking place there. But in some ways, it is even worse than in Kosovo, because not only are people being shot and killed, but they are also being tortured.

The gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) mentioned the amputations. It is very common there to chop off hands or feet, and sometimes both, and then turn people loose. Many of them, of course, die from loss of blood before they can get medical help. But regardless of whether they die or survive, it is a terrible act. Those survivors not only suffer, but are hampered from earning a living for the rest of their life.

What has troubled me most is that the United States Government has not responded as forcefully as I believe it could.

I say to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) I particularly appreciate that part of his resolution that calls on us to offer whatever assistance we can. It would take a minimal

amount of assistance to deal with this situation and help the forces of ECOMOG, which are from the other neighboring nations, overthrow the rebels and provide peace and stability to that country; and, yet, we have provided very little assistance. I hope that this resolution will be one means of addressing that situation and stabilizing the nation.

Once again, I want to emphasize to the Congress the importance of this issue and how destabilizing it is, not only in Sierra Leone, not only in this region; but in fact, in all of West Africa. If our Nation does not indicate a willingness to aid peace and stability in that region, we will likely to have very serious problems to contend with there in the future.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate those remarks from the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS).

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) from our committee, who has worked hard on this issue.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), the ranking member, for yielding me this time. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, for bringing this matter forward in an expeditious matter.

Like the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) that were just made.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for H. Res. 62, which expresses concern over the escalating violence and the gross violations of human rights in Sierra Leone.

On May 27, 1997, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the military junta, overthrew the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone led by President Ahmed Kabbah, suspended the Constitution, banned political activities, and invited the rebel fighters of the Revolutionary United Front to join the junta.

The resolution, as offered, calls for immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for human rights by all combatants in Sierra Leone. It encourages parties to engage in dialogue without preconditions; abhors human rights violations by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and Revolutionary United Front against innocent civilians, including children; encourages the United States to provide increased and appropriate logistical political support for ECOMOG and other participating countries; and calls upon all combatants to commit a cease-fire. It also commends Reverend Jesse Jackson for his extraordinary diplomacy in this area.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators committed to promoting democracy the

world over, we have followed with great interest the efforts undertaken by many countries in Africa seeking to promote democracy. Thus, it has been my belief that the United States has a responsibility to help countries in Africa succeed in their efforts toward stabilization, both for humanitarian reasons and because it is in the interest of democracy. We must do all within our power to assist in stabilizing the situation in Sierra Leone.

I urge our colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for H. Res. 62, which expresses concern over the escalating violence, and the gross violations of human rights in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Speaker, on May 27, 1997, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military junta, overthrew the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone led by President Ahmed Kabbah, suspended the constitution, banned political activities, and invited the rebel fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to join the junta.

This resolution calls for immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for human rights by all combatants in Sierra Leone. It encourages parties to engage in dialogue without preconditions; abhors human rights violations by Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and Revolutionary United Front against innocent civilians, including children; encourages the U.S. to provide increased and appropriate logistical, political support for ECOMOG and other participating countries and calls upon all combatants to commit to a cease fire.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators committed to promoting democracy the world over, we have followed with great interest the efforts undertaken by many countries in Africa seeking to promote democracy. Thus, it has long been my belief that the United States has a responsibility to help countries in Africa succeed in their efforts towards stabilization, both for humanitarian reasons and because it is in democracies' best interest. We must do all within our power to stabilize the situation in Sierra Leone.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS).

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 62, which expresses concerns on the escalating violence in Sierra Leone. This resolution deals with the genocide, forced servitude either in the Army and/or enslavement, because it deals with gross human rights violations, and it threatens the stability of a democratic government and a democratic society.

Not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, I stood here on the floor of the House saying, as we were involved with the escalating violence in Kosovo, that genocide is genocide, and it is wrong no matter where it is.

I say that the genocide that is taking place now in Sierra Leone must be

stopped; and we must, as Members of the House and members of the administration, pay attention to what is going on in Sierra Leone and on the continent of Africa. For, indeed, there is a saying that "to whom much is given, much is required." Much has been given to this great Nation of ours, and therefore much is required of it.

If we turn our backs on the wrong, the moral wrong, the children who are being murdered and maimed every day, who are not getting an education, who are not getting the opportunity to compete in the global society in which we now live, then we are wrong as Members of this House, and we are wrong as a Nation.

We must make efforts. We must put our money where our mouths are. We must make sure that we stop the wrong that is going on in Sierra Leone so that a civilized society can come back to an existence. We must put our foot down as we did in Kosovo to say that enough is enough, and we are going to have a civil government and stop the kinds of inhuman treatment and injustices that are taking place.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me once again thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for bringing this very important resolution to the floor.

Let me just say in conclusion that Sierra Leone is a country that many people do not realize in addition to Liberia, where free men and women went back to Africa to create the country of Liberia back in 1822, and then under President Monroe, Liberia was founded in 1847, called Liberia for free men in Monrovia, its free city, Sierra Leone was founded also by freed slaves that went to Freetown.

Many of these persons actually fought in the Revolutionary War, and they fought for the British actually. The British guaranteed that, if they won the war, or when the war was concluded, that these persons would earn their freedom by fighting with the British against the colonists. Of course many African Americans also fought with the colonists.

As my colleagues know, Crispus Attucks was the first person killed in the Boston Massacre in May of 1770. So Freetown does have some links to African-Americans.

Many Sierra Leonans also went to South Carolina where many of them still speak a dialect. So we feel there is an importance to not only African-Americans, but to all Americans in that we should move to see that this terrible war ends and that the cease-fire holds, and that we can move on to reconciliation as we have seen in Namibia after their long civil war and we saw in Mozambique in that war when people sat at the table and came up with a solution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to thank the participants of this debate. I have enjoyed working with Mr. Payne and the other members of the Subcommittee on Africa on this resolution, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

Mr. ROYCE, Mr. PAYNE, and the Members of the Subcommittee on African Affairs are to be congratulated for their attention to the difficult political and humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone.

When Sierra Leone received independence from Britain in 1961, it had everything going for it. The fierce tribalism that plagues some African nations never developed there, and although there are 14 ethnic groups, urban life has led to a blending of cultures. Sierra Leone benefited from strong educational institutions at the time of independence and boasts many highly educated citizens. But after independence, corrupt politicians found it relatively easy to consolidate power and accumulate great wealth.

Neighboring Liberia's civil war spilled over into Sierra Leone ten years ago, and faction leader Charles Taylor, now Liberia's president, armed and supported a Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front. Led by Foday Sankoh, a cashiered army corporal, the RUF has demonstrated no discernible political agenda. Its followers have murdered and maimed thousands of the poorest people. Like the Shining Path in Peru, the RUF terrorizes the population to ensure compliance. RUF leaders recruit teenage and pre-teen boys and girls, sometimes forcing them to kill their own families before taking them from their rural villages at gunpoint. The practice of amputation and carving RUF initials into the skin of children became commonplace.

Sierra Leoneans finally rose up and demanded elections. In 1996 they poured into the streets, even battling soldiers to protect ballot boxes. In the first democratic elections in many years, they chose Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a retired U.N. diplomat, as President.

Kabbah never came to grips with the country's many problems. In May 1997, the army seized the capital again and invited the RUF to join them in looting the city. Nine months later, Nigerian troops operating under the Economic Community of West Africa Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) ousted the vandals and restored Kabbah to power.

On January 6 of this year, the RUF launched another offensive on the capital and destroyed the country's largest hospital, its 170-year-old university, and its new telecommunications center before the ECOMOG troops drove them out again.

For the moment, there is a sign of hope. On May 18, 1999, President Kabbah and rebel leader Sankoh signed a cease-fire agreement. This tenuous peace must be guarded and nurtured. This resolution is an important step in sustaining continued U.S. engagement and support.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The question is on the mo-

tion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 62, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

CONDEMNING THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT (NIF) GOVERNMENT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H.Con.Res. 75) condemning the National Islamic Front (NIF) government for its genocidal war in southern Sudan, support for terrorism, and continued human rights violations, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 75

Whereas according to the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) an estimated 1,900,000 people have died over the past decade due to war and war-related causes and famine, while millions have been displaced from their homes and separated from their families;

Whereas the National Islamic Front (NIF) government's war policy in southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and the Ingessena Hills has brought untold suffering to innocent civilians and is threatening the very survival of a whole generation of southern Sudanese;

Whereas the people of the Nuba Mountains and the Ingessena Hills are at particular risk, having been specifically targeted through a deliberate prohibition of international food aid, inducing manmade famine, and by routinely bombing civilian centers, including religious services, schools, and hospitals;

Whereas the National Islamic Front government is deliberately and systematically committing genocide in southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and the Ingessena Hills;

Whereas the Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, defines "genocide" as official acts committed by a government with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, or religious group, and this definition also includes "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part";

Whereas the National Islamic Front government is systematically and repeatedly obstructed peace efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) over the past several years;

Whereas the Declaration of Principles (DOP) put forth by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development mediators is the most viable negotiating framework to resolve the problems in Sudan and to bring lasting peace;

Whereas humanitarian conditions in southern Sudan, especially in Bahr al-Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains, deteriorated in 1998, largely due to the National Islamic Front government's decision to ban United Nations' relief flights from February through the end of April in 1998 and the government continues to deny access in certain locations;

Whereas an estimated 2,600,000 southern Sudanese were at risk of starvation late last year in southern Sudan and the World Food Program currently estimates that 4,000,000 people are in need of emergency assistance;

Whereas the United Nations-coordinated relief effort, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), failed to respond in time at the height of the humanitarian crisis last year and has allowed the National Islamic Front government to manipulate and obstruct the relief efforts;

Whereas the relief work in the affected areas is further complicated by the National Islamic Front's repeated aerial attacks on feeding centers, clinics, and other civilian targets;

Whereas relief efforts are further exacerbated by looting, bombing, and killing of innocent civilians and relief workers by government-sponsored militias in the affected areas;

Whereas these government-sponsored militias have carried out violent raids in Aweil West, Twic, and Gogrial counties in Bahr el Ghazal/Lakes Region, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing thousands;

Whereas the National Islamic Front government has perpetrated a prolonged campaign of human rights abuses and discrimination throughout the country;

Whereas the National Islamic Front government-sponsored militias have been engaged in the enslavement of innocent civilians, including children, women, and the elderly;

Whereas the now common slave raids being carried out by the government's Popular Defense Force (PDF) militias are undertaken as part of the government's self-declared jihad (holy war) against the predominantly traditional and Christian south;

Whereas, according to the American Anti-Slavery Group of Boston, there are tens of thousands of women and children now living as chattel slaves in Sudan;

Whereas these women and children were captured in slave raids taking place over a decade by militia armed and controlled by the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum—they are bought, sold, branded, and bred;

Whereas the Department of State, in its report on Human Rights Practices for 1997, affirmed that "reports and information from a variety of sources after February 1994 indicate that the number of cases of slavery, servitude, slave trade, and forced labor have increased alarmingly";

Whereas the enslavement of people is considered in international law as "crime against humanity";

Whereas observers estimate the number of people enslaved by government-sponsored militias to be in the tens of thousands;

Whereas former United Nations Special Rapporteur for Sudan, Gaspar Biro, and his successor, Leonardo Franco, reported on a number of occasions the routine practice of